

13.1.6

# **CENTRE PLAN**

## **OBJECTIVES & POLICIES**

# CENTRE PLAN OVERVIEW

**The Centre Plan** will be the first comprehensive planning policy for the Regional Centre. The Draft Centre Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the citizens of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

**The release** of the Draft Centre Plan is an important moment in the planning of the Municipality and is being released in installments from late September and throughout the month of October. The installments allow time for considered review and public input for each section of the Draft Plan.

A series of public engagement events that will explain the draft policies and ask for feedback. As a comprehensive plan, the Centre Plan addresses seven theme areas and the different components of the urban structure.

## DRAFT PLAN ROLL-OUT

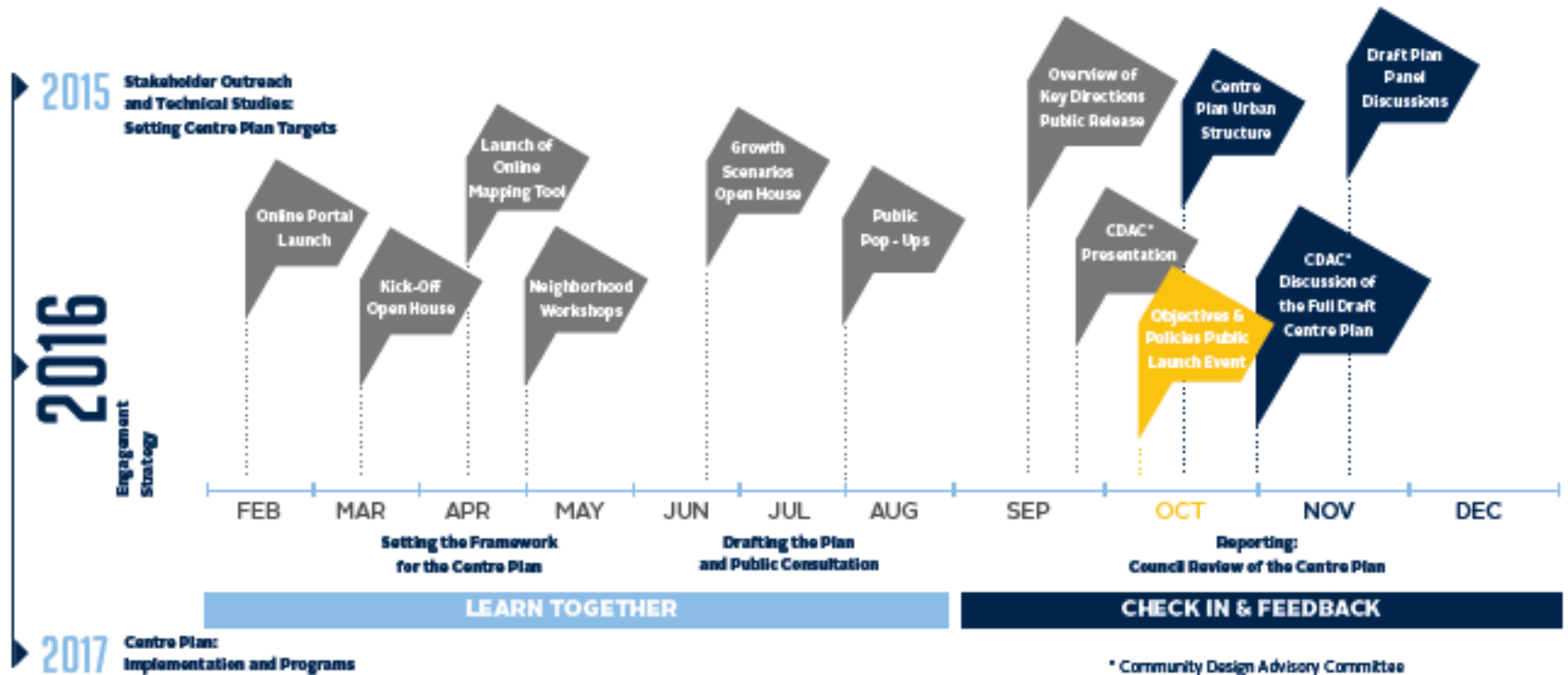
**October 11** – Release of supporting policies for each theme area for consideration at public event.

**October 19 – Centre Plan Urban Structure Presentation & Open House:** Release of urban structure map, objectives for each area, and the policies that apply to those areas.

**October 26 – Community Design Advisory Committee (CDAC) Discussion of the Full Draft Centre Plan:** Plan available in its entirety, complete with an implementation and monitoring chapter.

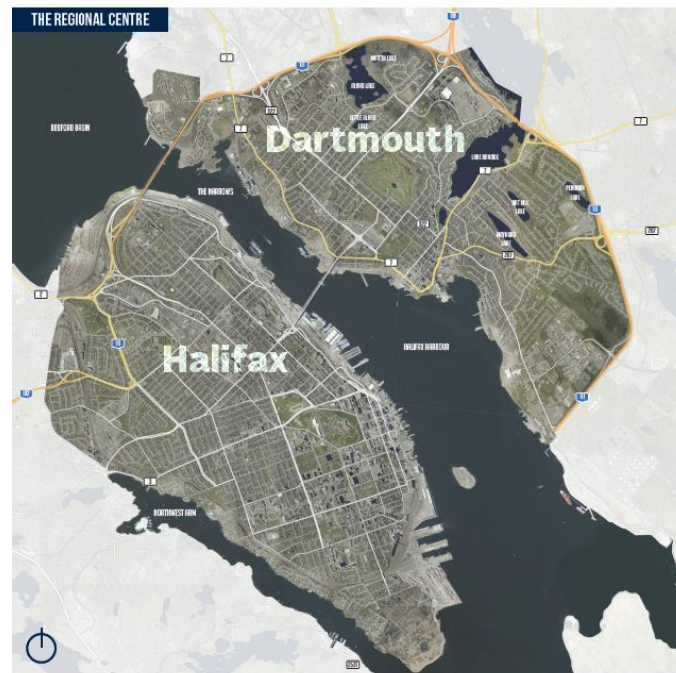
**Throughout November:** Opportunity for public to provide feedback about the draft plan to inform the final form.

# CENTRE PLAN OVERVIEW



# THE CENTRE PLAN'S PURPOSE

The Centre Plan is a secondary plan that guides the development, use, and form of the Halifax Peninsula and Dartmouth within the Circumferential Highway – called the Regional Centre. The Regional Centre is expected to undergo significant change over the next 15 years. The Centre Plan will guide development in the Regional Centre and serve as a blueprint for smart development.



# ROLE & SCOPE

## PLAN HIERARCHY

The power to create plans is granted to the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) by the Province of Nova Scotia through the **Halifax Regional Municipality Charter**.

The **Regional Plan** provides high level direction for all of HRM regarding green space, resource management, sustainability, growth, form, transportation, economic development, culture, heritage and governance.

These higher level documents and policies are the Centre Plan's guiding framework.

It is also important to note, that there are numerous **Priority Plans** that have been developed, are being developed, or will be developed that impact the Regional Centre. These are subject matter plans, such as the Moving Forward Together Plan, the Active Transportation Plan, and the Greater Halifax Economic Strategy.

The Centre Plan aligns with the recommendations in these documents and during its regular reviews will continue to be examined in light of best practice or changes to local circumstances throughout its 15 year life span.



# ROLE & SCOPE

## HOW IT WILL BE USED

Together with HRM's suite of planning documents and bylaws, the Centre Plan will be used in the following ways:



**1. Inform Council decision making** about growth, investment and programming by identifying areas that are appropriate for growth and managing the form that growth can take while also considering the amenities and other supports needed for a growing Regional Centre.



**4. Establish a policy framework** for the review of subdivision, development permit and rezoning applications to respect the overall vision and objectives for each area of the Regional Centre.



**2. Provide certainty about the future direction** of the Regional Centre and its sub-areas for residents, organizations, businesses, community groups and developers so they are aware of the uses, forms and directions that apply to their communities and sites.



**5. Highlight areas for further investment** through capital projects, including streetscaping, water, and sewer upgrades.



**3. Guide other planning initiatives** including studies, plans and bylaws to regulate the future form, use and design of the Regional Centre.



# GROWING CHALLENGES

**HRM is experiencing diverse challenges managing change and the impacts of growth in the Regional Centre. These challenges were identified through the public engagement process and during the analysis undertaken to create this plan. They include:**

**Physical Accessibility:** Many of the buildings, sidewalks and spaces in the Regional Centre were built before society carefully considered the mobility needs of all residents.

**Affordability:** Population growth places pressure on commercial and residential affordability.

**Climate Change:** As the world's climate changes, municipalities need to remain adaptive and resilient.

**Changing Demographics:** HRM, like many communities across Canada, has an aging population. However, some communities within HRM are experiencing an increase in young families and multi-generational families.

**Suburban Competition:** Though there is renewed interest in urban living, the Regional Centre continues to face competition from suburban locations.

**Lack of Diversity in Real Estate:** A vibrant city depends on demographic and commercial diversity and both of these require a range of housing types and commercial spaces.

**Finite Market Demand:** There is a finite amount of development demand in the Regional Centre over the life of this plan.

**Moving People:** Future land use decisions must consider how to provide residents with a variety of transportation options within a limited amount of space.

**Process:** Planning must balance the need to provide certainty while remaining flexible and open to innovative designs, changing markets and shifting expectations.

**Public Spaces:** New residents will place additional pressure on existing public spaces and amenities.

**Sensitive Development:** The Regional Centre has a strong built heritage to respect and consider.

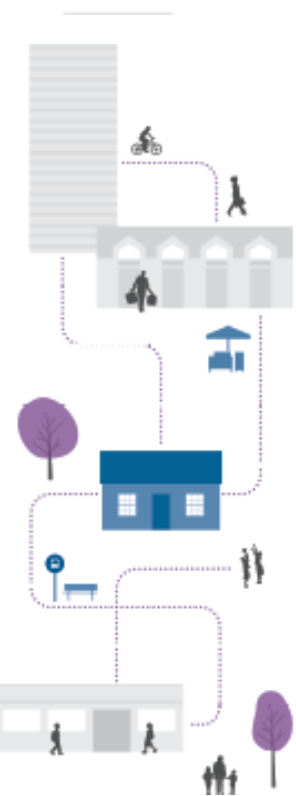
**The Unknown:** Technology and society are always changing. Some trends can be anticipated while others cannot, which requires an adaptive and open Centre Plan.

# CORE CONCEPTS

The vision of the Regional Plan is supported through Core Concepts which are woven throughout the draft Centre Plan to ensure consistency and clarity in direction.

## COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Complete communities are places that offer and support a variety of lifestyle choices. These choices allow people of all ages and abilities to live, work, shop, learn, and play in close proximity to one another. The Centre Plan provides the land use and design policies to promote the **mixed use and compact development that enables people to safely and conveniently access the goods and services they need in their daily lives, all within a short journey.**





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## HUMAN SCALE DESIGN

Human scale design makes people feel at ease and allows them to relate to their surroundings. It refers to a **relationship between the size, shape, and design of the components in the urban environment that matches the speed and way that people move around cities**. Buildings and streets, as well as elements like trees and street furniture, are all physical elements that can be designed and built at a scale that is comfortable for people.



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## PEDESTRIANS FIRST

Pedestrians first policies prioritize the needs and comfort of pedestrians first. The intent is to **create safe, comfortable and more enjoyable environments for people of all ages and abilities**. Specific pedestrian orientated design elements include connected streets, short blocks, four way intersections, hard surfaced pathways and an extensive sidewalk network. Pedestrians first design **makes walking more convenient and viable as a transportation choice**, as well as leading to other community benefits such as a reduction in emissions and improved public health.

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## STRATEGIC GROWTH

To encourage economically and environmentally responsible growth, the Centre Plan is designed to accommodate 40% of the Region's Growth throughout the Regional Centre. This **growth will be distributed throughout the centre in context-appropriate forms**. This means that the majority of growth throughout the Regional Centre will occur in moderate height buildings with tall buildings located strategically. Established residential areas can accommodate growth through hidden density, which means housing forms that do not alter the appearance and built character of the community.



# THEME AREA OBJECTIVES

At the beginning of the Centre Plan process, seven themes were identified as critical to ensuring a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to planning. Below are the objectives for each of these theme areas that frame the policy direction of the plan.



## LAND USE & DESIGN

1. To improve communities for every resident within the Regional Centre where they can walk to a **range of uses and amenities**.
2. To ensure new **development responds to the surrounding context** through appropriate transitions, uses, limited off-site impacts, and a positive relationship to the sidewalk.
3. To implement a consistent **human-scale approach** to street design and frontages.
4. To promote **all-season design** for new developments that creates pleasant microclimates for pedestrians throughout the year and in different weather conditions.
5. To encourage a **variety of housing choice** in diverse forms, tenures and densities throughout the Regional Centre.

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1. To ensure development and planning decisions **place pedestrians first** followed by cycling, public transit, car sharing, utility and private vehicles.
2. To implement an integrated mobility approach throughout the Regional Centre that **designs for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and drivers in all street designs and re-designs.**
3. To support **greater public transit and active transportation use** through public infrastructure, land use, and the built form.
4. To **enhance and expand pedestrian corridors and pathways** to provide safe and convenient connectivity within, to, and from the Regional Centre.
5. To **manage and optimize parking** requirements.

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1. To **protect and enhance the Regional Centre's public parks and open spaces** for future generations.
2. To **consult and work with residents, organizations, businesses and other stakeholders** on parks programming and design.
3. To **grow the open space network** in the Regional Centre and integrate it within the larger municipality.
4. To **improve the accessibility of public amenities**, including water bodies and community facilities for all residents.
5. To accommodate a **wide range of activities** within The Regional Centre's diverse public spaces.

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## CULTURE & HERITAGE

1. To provide **innovative and holistic heritage and land use planning policies** to ensure community-identified heritage values are considered in decisions affecting land use.
2. To develop an **evidence-based inventory of potential historic properties** in the Regional Centre to inform land use and development decisions affecting cultural heritage.
3. To enable the **definition of potential heritage conservation districts and cultural landscapes** within the Regional Centre.
4. To establish a range of **monetary and non-monetary incentives and develop partnerships** for the encouragement of public and private sector investments in cultural heritage conservation and arts and culture initiatives.
5. To encourage and support the on-going growth of a **diverse range of publicly accessible arts and cultural venues, cultural events and seasonal celebrations**.



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## HOUSING

1. To provide **housing choice and variety** throughout the Regional Centre that is attractive to a diversity of people, including families and individuals of all ages.
2. To increase **affordable housing** units throughout the Regional Centre.
3. To enhance opportunities for **new units within existing structures and infill housing**.
4. To support **special care facilities** through the Regional Centre.

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**SUSTAINABILITY**

1. To **improve/innovate in stormwater management, water and sewer capacity, and water quality.**
2. To promote **renewable energy, district energy, and energy efficiency** to reduce the Regional Centre's overall energy consumption.
3. To support and promote **tree planting, restoration initiatives and other natural processes** when possible.
4. To promote and expand **urban food production and harvesting** yields to result in greater choices in local and healthy food.

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## JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. To **work with hospitals, universities, colleges, and other levels of government** to support the continued success of these employers in the Regional Centre.
2. To **support small businesses and entrepreneurial activities** through land use regulation, programs and initiatives.
3. To **foster economic participation** through support service provision for residents.